

Abraham Lincoln

By

David Lloyd George



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Abraham Lincoln

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An address before the Midday Luncheon Club,
Leland Hotel, Springfield, Illinois,
Thursday, October 18, 1923

By
David Lloyd George




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Remarks of
David Lloyd George at Lincoln's Tomb, Springfield, Illinois, October 18, 1923

He is the greatest man grown up on the American continent. He is growing too; he grows,— oh, yes, he grows.

I have just been reading about the time he had. I read one of the most recent ones (books) about two years ago. It was rather an account of the troubles he had in the war, with generals and politicians. *They were worse than mine.*



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Address of the Right Honorable David Lloyd
George, before the Midday Luncheon Club,
Leland Hotel, Springfield, Illinois,
Thursday, October 18, 1923*

Mr. Chairman, Secretary of State, Your Honor the Governor, Your Worship the Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen: I have to thank the club for the honor they are conferring upon me and upon my wife and daughter and my comrades and colleagues who have accompanied us in entertaining us on our visit to Springfield. It is only part of the overwhelming kindness which we have received ever since we came to this great land, and it will be one of the most pleasing and memorable episodes in the whole course of our lives. But much as I wanted to see your great land, there was one spot above all others I was anxious to see, and that was the home of Abraham Lincoln, the inspirer of Democracy, not merely in your country, but in all lands.

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I have come here today with one purpose and one purpose only. That is, to pay my humble and reverent tribute of respect to the memory of one of the great men of the world. It is difficult for me to express the feelings with which I visited the home and the last resting place of one of the noblest figures in the history of mankind; a man loved by the people in all lands, a man beloved by those who do love the people in all lands. There have been many great men whose names have been inscribed on the scroll of human history; there are only a few whose names have become a legend amongst men. Amongst those are conspicuously stamped the name of Abraham Lincoln. His fame is wider today than it was at the date of his tragic death, and it is widening every year. His influence is deeper and is still deepening. Even if this were the occasion, I do not feel competent to pronounce any judgment on the qualities that made him great and on the deeds and words that will make his name endure forevermore. Least of all would I presume to do so in the city where there are men still living who remember and knew him. All I know about him is that he was one of those rare men whom you do not associate with any particular creed, party, and, if you will forgive me for saying so, not even with

any country, for he belongs to mankind in every race, in every clime, and in every age.

There are the great men of the party, and the great men of creeds. There are the great men of their time and there are the great men of all time of their own native land; but Lincoln was a great man of all time, for all parties, for all lands and for all races of men. He was the choice and champion of a party, but his lofty soul could see over and beyond party walls the unlimited terrain beyond. His motto was: "Stand with anybody who stands right. Stand with him while he is right and part with him when he goes wrong." Those were his own words. No pure partisan would ever assent to so discriminating and disintegrating a proposition.

I have read many of his biographies. I read a very remarkable one which was published two years ago. Some one handed it to me at Niagara Falls, and I read it with deep and intense interest. His career was highly successful, judged by every standard of success—from the wretched log cabin at Kentucky, a picture of which I saw today, through that comfortable home I witnessed, and on to the official residence of the President of the greatest republic on earth. It seems a triumphal march enough

for any ambition, and yet, his life is in many ways one of the saddest of human stories, and even the tragic end comes as a relief.

He once said, "I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom"—a great saying. And yet as soon as he reached the height of his ambition, this man who shunned hurt and scattered kindness on his path was doomed by a cruel destiny to send millions of his own fellow countrymen through the torturing experiences of a prolonged and fierce war against their own kith and kin. Thus, the tenderest soul who ever ruled over men was driven for five years by an inexorable fate to pierce the gentle hearts of mothers with anguish that death alone can assuage. And in this, the greatest and most poignant task of his life, he was worried, harassed, encumbered, lassoed at every turn by the vanities, the jealousies, the factiousness and the wiles of swarms of little men. He was misrepresented, misunderstood, maligned, derided, thwarted in every good impulse, thought, or deed. No wonder his photographs — and I have studied most of them, became sadder and sadder and more and more tragic year by year up to the tragic end.

His example and his wise sayings are the inheritance of mankind, and will be quoted and

used to save mankind from its follies to the end of the ages. The lessons of his statesmanship are as applicable today as they were sixty years ago. They will be as applicable a thousand years hence as they are today. Being dead, he still speaketh. He has messages of moment for this present hour. I will give you two of them.

The messages of Abraham Lincoln to this day and this moment and this emergency in the life of man are: "Clemency in the hour of triumph." The doctrine of Abraham Lincoln was "Reconcile the vanquished."

It is a time for remembering that vengeance is the justice of the savage and that conciliation is the triumph of civilization over barbarism. Lincoln is the finest product in the realm of statesmanship of the Christian civilization, and the wise counsel he gave to his own people in the day of their triumph he gives today to the people of Europe in the hour of their victory over the forces that menace their liberties.

What is his next message? "Trust the common people." He believed in their sincerity, he believed in their common sense, he believed in their inherent justice, he believed in their ultimate unselfishness. The first impulse of the people may be selfish. Their final word is always unselfish. That was the doctrine that

Abraham Lincoln thought and believed in, and today, when Democracy is in greater peril than it has probably been in your life time or mine, the message of Abraham Lincoln carries across the waves, and will, I hope, be heard in Europe and will impel the democracies of Europe to fight against the wave of autocracy that is sweeping over our continent. Russia, an autocracy; Italy for the moment a dictatorship; Spain, a dictatorship; Germany, slipping into dictatorship — most of Europe having abandoned confidence in the people. It is the hour of Abraham Lincoln's doctrine to be preached in the countries of Europe. His influence upon our democracy in England is deep, and I believe permanent, and if the peril reaches our shores, the words of Abraham Lincoln will be an inspiration and a strength for those who will be battling for the cause of the people.

A moment ago there were two flags here, your great flag and our great flag. They were intertwined. They have been ranged side by side in a great struggle in Europe for liberty, and they emerged triumphantly. I venture to say it is not the last time these two flags will be rallied to for the cause of freedom. A time will come, a time is coming, when the principles of Abraham Lincoln will have to be fought for

again, and these two flags will be the rallying centers in that struggle; your great flag representing the stars that illumine the darkness that falls upon the children of men, that is falling on them now in Europe, the bars that represent the shafts of sunlight that will dispel that darkness; our flag, with the cross that represents the hope of the earth in all its trials. These two flags standing together, rallying around them men taught in the principles of Abraham Lincoln, will yet save the world for liberty, for peace, for good will and honest men.

